

PAC's political slant has some dog lovers howling

By C.W. Nevius | October 24, 2016 | Updated: October 25, 2016 10:37am



Photo: Leah Millis, The Chronicle



State senate candidate Jane Kim (left) got the endorsement of San Francisco's DogPAC over rival Scott Wiener (right).

This Scott Wiener-versus-Jane Kim race for state Senate is turning into a real dogfight.

No seriously, I mean with real dogs.

Two dog advocacy groups, SFDog and DogPAC, are barking back and forth over candidates. Supporters of SFDog, a nonprofit that does not endorse candidates, are growling that DogPAC, a registered political action committee, shed its canine advocacy to roll over for political purposes.

Specifically, SFDog is upset that DogPAC endorsed a slate of progressive candidates who might not be the most dog-friendly in the pack.

Critics say DogPAC consists of one person: Bruce Wolfe, who they say is using the political action committee not to promote the interests of dog walkers but to promote the progressive candidates he wants to win election.

Back in 2011, the organization backed John Avalos in his unsuccessful bid for mayor, calling him "Dog's best friend."

"If a dog could vote, we think they would vote for our candidates," Wolfe told CBS at the time.

But SFDog President Sally Stephens says dog owners are focused on two issues: off-leash access to the Golden Gate National Recreation Area and dog rescue.

"I was personally surprised that Scott Wiener did not get an endorsement when he's been the strongest supporter of dog issues for years," Stephens said.

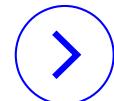
DogPAC endorsed Jane Kim over Wiener, and its website said Wiener did not get a questionnaire back to the group in time to be considered for an endorsement.



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Wolfe, who only had a few seconds to talk when I reached him Monday, got his back up when I suggested that the DogPAC site was essentially promoting progressive candidates over candidates who strongly support the dog community.



"That's a very loaded statement," he said. "I don't think that's the case at all. We're all about dogs, and we've always been that way."

Kim campaign director Eric Jaye stayed resolutely on message when contacted for comment. He was not about to run after some squirrelly question about who is the better candidate for dog owners.

"Here's my quote," he said. "It is difficult to be a responsible pet companion if Scott Wiener and his Republican backers get you evicted."

As we know, dogs really do outnumber children in San Francisco. A 2007 Chronicle story said that Animal Care and Control estimated 120,000 dogs and the 2010 census calculated 107,000 children.

And local dog owners are passionate. If you doubt it, ask members of a group like the Friends of the Upper Noe Dog Owners Group about limiting off-leash access in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. Then step back because you might get bit.

Christopher Faust is one of the leaders of the group, and he's not happy with DogPAC.

He said failing to endorse the candidate most active in dog advocacy is "a slap in the face. People are saying, 'Wait, who are we supporting and why did we switch?' Well, we didn't switch."

"The primary concern is that everybody DogPAC endorsed were progressive candidates," Stephens said. "The dog community is very diverse. There are moderates, progressives and probably even some Trump supporters who want to walk their dogs at Fort Funston."

Furthering the confusion, there was a previous DogPAC, which was active in local politics from 2000 to 2004. That group held candidate forums, raised money for dog-friendly candidates and

polled members to decide whom to endorse.

This version, critics say, is more about political advocacy than being dog-friendly. And frankly, some of the endorsements start with a quick pat on the head for dogs, then move to other issues.

"Jane recognizes the importance of the human-animal bond in personal, social and mental health and plans on carrying this principle in Sacramento," DogPAC says, then pivots to economic issues. "She has supported rent control, more affordable housing and other programs to help people stay in their homes."

Wiener's spokesman, Jeff Cretan, doesn't want to get into the dog pile with DogPAC.

"Their endorsements are all to the left," he said. "I am sure Jane is not antidog. But Scott has passed multiple pieces of dog-friendly legislation. He authored the dog-walking permitting. He's gone to rallies."

And Cretan said, his candidate has another advantage.

"He's a Wiener."

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